

VZCZCXYZ0034  
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHRB #1137/01 1631842  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 121842Z JUN 06  
FM AMEMBASSY RABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3991  
INFO RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY 4032  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 2978  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 5530  
RUEHNK/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT PRIORITY 3205  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 4241  
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 8924  
RUEHCL/AMCONSUL CASABLANCA PRIORITY 1787  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0991  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0548

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 001137

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/MAG, IO; GENEVA FOR RMA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/02/2009

TAGS: [KPKO](#) [MO](#) [PBTS](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: WESTERN SAHARA: WHAT'S HAPPENING IN TINDOUF?

REF: ALGIERS 1002

Classified By: Pol/C Tim Lenderking for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

**¶1.** (SBU) Two Sahrawi tribal leaders, Sheikh Abdi Salama Nafaa of Laayoune and Idrissi Belali from Smara, previously unknown to the embassy, called on Polcouns June 9 to seek US support for what they alleged were injustices being committed against members of the Rgiubat tribe, subgroup Layeshi (phonetic), following an incident between a member of the tribe and the Polisario police in the February 27 refugee camp. Sheikh Nafaa, who described himself as the leading Sheikh of the Layeshi, said that during the last week of May, a Layeshi man was forced to pay a toll at two consecutive checkpoints while traveling in his vehicle in the Tindouf area. Paying one was fine, but the man felt that paying two was excessive. He argued with the Polisario police. The argument became heated, and the police hauled him out of his car and beat him. Layeshi tribal elders then went to the local police station and demanded an investigation, saying they would return in two days for answers. When they returned two days later, the police were rude and threw them out. Fighting (unarmed) broke out, property was destroyed in the fracas, and many people were injured, some severely. Eighteen Layeshi tribespeople were arrested; some were taken to the hospital, while others are languishing in the Taibiyeh Rabuni prison, 30 kilometers from Rabuni, including minors such as Sheikh Nafaa's eleven year-old nephew. Forty people have fled February 27 camp and are being pursued by the Polisario, the men alleged. Seventy-five women gathered outside the police station to demand the release of their husbands and relatives. The Algerians imposed a telephone black-out, the Sheikh said, but people have been able to communicate via satellite phones. The Sheikh claims he has received many phone calls from the camp providing him the details of the situation.

**¶2.** (SBU) The two leaders requested US support for sending an international human rights organization to the camp to investigate. They said the situation remained tense, and they were not sanguine that the problem could be solved locally and tribal dignity appropriately restored. Belali, who claimed to have been a founding member of the Polisario before "defecting" to Morocco in 1988, said people in the camps were tired of Polisario injustice, and said a broader uprising was perhaps underway. The two men said all the evidence the international community needs to verify the

abuses and "torture" could be found among the detainees in the Rabuni prison. They said the conditions at the prison are abysmal: no medical care, no family visits, no tea, and no protection from the heat. They planned to lobby other embassies in Rabat.

CORCAS

¶3. (SBU) Polcouns asked whether the Royal Council for Saharan Affairs (CORCAS) supported the call for international action on Tindouf. The two men said they were not members of CORCAS, nor had they specifically discussed the Tindouf situation with CORCAS. They were decidedly unenthusiastic about CORCAS, saying it is not representative of the Sahrawis because "no one is elected" and "the people were not consulted." They granted nevertheless that CORCAS represents a start, though they said CORCAS has made some "mistakes." They regretted not being members of CORCAS. Belali said he was a member of the original CORCAS, and said the previous council was better because some members were elected. The two men advocated a dialogue among all Sahrawis ( Polisario, those living abroad ) to find a solution to the Western Sahara. But the solution, they said firmly, was autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty. As for human rights, they said the situation in the territory was improving slowly. People can speak their minds more freely, they said, but there have been abuses (neither denied the GOM beats demonstrators). They were pleased that human rights organizations and journalists visit the territory. They also said the UN-run family visits program was helpful as a humanitarian initiative. They believed the Algerians stopped the program because of the situation they described in Tindouf.

¶4. (SBU) Poloffs also received on June 2 Sahrawi activist Akay Dahi representing the Association des Portes Disparus Au Polisario (APDP, "Association of those who disappeared by/to the Polisario") based in Laayoune. He said APDP maintains close contacts with Sahrawis in the Tindouf camps. He passed to Poloffs the following letter (informal embassy translation), addressed to Secretary Rice:

To the Secretary of State of America,

We are writing to ask the US administration for intervention in the massacres perpetrated by the Polisario militias against our sequestered brothers in Tindouf. Since May 30, the security and oppression forces of the Polisario have perpetrated violations against the inhabitants of the February 27 camp in Tindouf in southern Algeria. Even pregnant women, the elderly and children were subjected to this torture. We are requesting the American administration, people and organizations to intervene to stop the oppression.

¶5. (SBU) Dahi said he has contacts in the Tindouf camps whom he has not been able to reach. Initially, these contacts were calling on land lines, using different pay telephones for no more than two minutes at a time. By June 1, Dahi said all contact had ceased. Moroccan press reports in late May included televised interviews with Sahrawis living in Europe saying they could not reach relatives in the camps.

¶6. (C) In several conversations with Polcouns, MINURSO was unable to verify Moroccan or Polisario claims of the situation in Tindouf, other than to report that there was clearly no uprising underway in any of the camps. In the end MINURSO concluded, in a report to DPKO in New York, that an incident had taken place following a dispute in one of the camps, leading to fights, arrests, and injuries.

Comment

¶7. (C) Based on our contacts, it seems clear that there has been an incident in February 27 camp, but it seems to fall well short of an "uprising" or even a conflict between the Sahrawi people and the Polisario, as the GOM would have us believe. The most detailed report we have is the Sheikh's,

who framed the problem more as a tribal issue, normally resolved by elders but now out of hand, than as a political confrontation.

\*\*\*\*\*  
Visit Embassy Rabat's Classified Website;  
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/rabat>  
\*\*\*\*\*

Riley